

Triangulum: The Next War

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Summary: It is two years after the conclusion of the ODYSSEUS expedition, and OAC-Republic relations are stable and profitable. However, when Palpatine reveals his grand scheme, will the alliance hold, or will the next war be too much to bear for both sides? Rated T for mild swearing, AU for both franchises like the last one.

## 1. A Shadow in the Mirror

**\*\*AN:** Following in the wake of its predecessor, I hereby present Triangulum: The Next War! The story takes its name from a post-WWI poem called "The Next War," featured in the compilation Halo: Evolutions.**\*\***

\_Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!  
>We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.<br>No soldier's paid to kick against His powers.  
>We laughed, -knowing that better men would come,<br>And greater wars: when each proud fighter brags  
>He wars on Death, for lives; not men, for flags.<em>

-The Next War, Wilfred Owen

**\*\*Location:** High Earth Orbit, Sol System, Orion Arm, Milky Way Galaxy**\*\***

**\*\*Date:** November 10\*\*\*\*th\*\*\*\*, 2561 (UNSC Military Calendar)**\*\***

**\*\*3 years after Operation: ODYSSEUS and Treaty of Triangulum\*\***

Lieutenant Commander Benjamin Keyes stood on the bridge of his ship, the UNSC \_Louhi's Mirror\_, looking down at Earth. He himself had not been born on it; rather, he originated from the colony of Andalus in the Theta Horologii system. Andalus was one of the few urban colonies not razed by the Covenant during the Great War, and for that Benjamin

was grateful. He was a cousin of the now-deceased Miranda Keyes, and nephew of the late great Rear Admiral Jacob Keyes, who sacrificed his life to help destroy Installation 04. Benjamin, now twenty-five, enlisted in the navy at sixteen because he wanted to become like his more famous relatives. Now, he was the captain of a destroyer. Ben sighed and turned his attention to the helmsman.

"Helm, set a course for the Luna Gate and prepare to jump to Alderaan."  
>"Yes sir."<p>

After the signing of the Treaty of Triangulum, the UNSC and Republic had undertaken a massive project: the Intergalactic Translight Movement Array, better known as the jumpgates. These gates were based on the principles of the Shaw-Fujikawa Translight Engine, except on a larger and more permanent scale. The gates used seven translight drives to create a large Slipspace portal, much like the one beneath Voi, around thirty kilometers across. These portals could be used to bring a ship from Triangulum to the Milky Way in just over three Earth Standard weeks. The translight gates were constructed above many important worlds such the planets of the Sol System, Sanghelios, Balaho, Coruscant, and Alderaan, and linked the OAC and Republic together across millions of light-years.

Keyes watched as his vessel drifted toward Luna, engines shut off for the approach. Once at the gate, he entered the code for the Alderaan Gate, powered up the engines for extra jump speed, and then headed into the black void.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>-THREE WEEKS LATER-<strong>

The Mirror exited Slipspace in high Alderaan orbit, where a Republic battlegroup was patrolling the space above the planet. The automated systems on those ships sent out a signal, which was answered quickly by the systems of the destroyer.

In the bridge, Ben was talking to the radar operator when the ship's AI, Seppo, popped up on a holopad. Seppo's avatar was that of a long-bearded Finnish blacksmith, complete with a rugged and weary face and large hammer. He was dressed in a leather tunic and wore a pendant with Sol, Luna, and several stars on it.

"Lt. Commander, the jump was successful. We have reached the Alderaan system without incident."  
>"Alright, Seppo. Form up with those Republic cruisers and contact them."<br>"It shall be done, sir."

The Louhi's Mirror equalized speed with the other ships and joined their formation. The commander of the lead ship, one Gial Ackbar of the Mon Calamari, appeared on the comms holotank.

"Lt. Commander, we have spotted some CIS Remnant ships near the edge of the system. Care to join in?"  
>"I'd be happy, Captain Ackbar. Revving up the main guns now."<p>

The twin Mk. 103 Magnetic Accelerator Cannons in the forward section began to heat up and the Republic/UNSC task force jumped to the

location of the Separatists. There, several Separatist cruisers were clustered together in the beginnings of a battle formation.

"All Venators, prepare for combat!"  
>"Combat crew of the Louhi's Mirror, activate all weapons systems! Get the MAC guns to 100 percent power!"

At three thousand kilometers, the Mirror opened fire with its main battery. Two searing-hot MAC rounds flashed through the black void at 40 percent light-speed. The lead cruiser's bow exploded in a ball of sparks and flame as the shots struck, blowing the forward plating and shields away and depressurizing parts of the ship. In response the cruisers fired their own salvo back at the allied force, disabling one of the Venator-class destroyers.

"Fire the Rapiers and Archers! Those SOBs aren't getting away so easily!"

Missiles streaked from the Mirror's launch tubes and impacted a second cruiser. The Rapiers slammed into the bridge, while the Archers hit the engines. The resulting chain reaction destroyed the cruiser and sent debris in all directions.

\* \* \*

><p>On the lead Venator, the Demolisher, Captain Ackbar sat staring at the tac-screen on his ship. He gave the order to fire a salvo of turbolasers and target the third and fourth ships.

"Fire a volley! Take out the cruisers on the left!"

The gunners complied, and streaks of red light discharged from the Demolisher's cannons. The shots slammed into the nadir hull of the third cruiser, blasting a hole through the keel and every deck, obliterating it. The fourth cruiser had the same luck; the bolts impacted on the engine block, crippling it. Ackbar looked to the UNSC destroyer and saw that it had fired a Shiva nuclear missile. Once, it was thought that nukes were primitive and barbaric; the UNSC proved this belief wrong. The nuclear weapons used by them had been refined for centuries, and were capable of unleashing havoc on ships and cities alike. The Shiva hit the port side of the ship, sending it tumbling because of the massive amounts of air evacuated from the port chambers. The cruiser careened into its one remaining brethren, and both warships were destroyed in the collision.

"That's a confirmed hit on those cruisers. Good job, Lt. Commander. You've served us well."

>"Thank you, Captain. It was the least I could do to help out an ally."<p>

Back on the bridge of the destroyer, Keyes headed back to the Alderaan Gate and jumped to Coruscant, mere hours away. When he arrived, he docked at the Rubaiyat Orbital Repair Yard, the largest UNSC space station in the system, next to some CAS-class assault carriers for refitting and briefing on his next mission. Benjamin and the bridge crew disembarked, saluted their way through a Marine checkpoint, and entered the office of Rear Admiral Amelia Wexler, Rubaiyat's commander.

"Lt. Commander. I didn't expect your arrival for another few days;

you're early. Anyway I heard about that little skirmish in the Alderaan system. You performed quite admirably, and I think you're due for another promotion after leading OAC forces at the Battle of Artello."

She handed Ben the silver oak leaf of a Commander.

"From now on, you are full Commander Benjamin Keyes. Good job, Ben, we need more leaders like you. Now, go get some rest. You've earned it."

## 2. The Chancellor

**\*\*AN: Well, the first minor battle has taken place. The "Rise of the Empire" part will take place soon. For now, Dr. Halsey and Prof. Anders are doing science.\*\***

In the Corellian system, there was a space station. The station was at the barycenter between the Twin Worlds of Talus and Tralus, and it was known as Centerpoint Station. Everyone knew it was there; it had been for as long as records went back, and it was probably there even before that. However, many mysteries surrounded it and its constructors. Who built it, and for what? Did it have a connection to the strange composition of the Corellian system? For eons, nobody could find it out. One day, a motley expedition of scientists, led by the renowned Dr. Catherine Halsey, went to find out.

**\*\*Date: November 11, 2561\*\***

**\*\*Location: Twin Worlds, Corellian System, Galactic Republic, Triangulum Galaxy\*\***

Dr. Halsey was strapped into the cockpit of a Pelican-II dropship when she finally sighted her goal: Centerpoint Station. While she had never seen it up-close, she'd heard about it from records and seen pictures. For three years she hypothesized about its origins, about who made it, and finally she had a good answer: the Forerunners.

After the Great War's conclusion, UNSC and Sangheili explorers found treasure troves of Forerunner records on Line Installations and the other Halos. These records say that the Forerunner Ecumene encompassed not only the Milky Way, but other galaxies as well. Through extensive translation, it was revealed in the years since the formation of the intergalactic alliance that some of the Forerunners had migrated to a galaxy known to them as "Ethun Varaka." Details of this unknown galaxy were scarce, but they seemed to point to a specific star system in Triangulum. This, combined with Republic star charts, more-or-less confirmed the coordinates as the Corellian system. For over a year, Halsey had tried to acquire a permit to enter the station. When she got it, the brightest minds of the OAC and Republic got together, rented out an unarmed Pelican-II from the UNSC, and set off. Now, the unarmed dropship was drifting silently through the vacuum with two Broadwords by its side.

"Astra 1-1, this is Victoire Actual. We don't have the permits you do; we need to leave. From this point onward, you're on your own."

>"Affirmative, Victoire. Station approach distance has decreased to

five thousand kilometers."<p>

The tiny craft flew through space for twenty minutes more before finally reaching the main entry point.

"The gates are open-strange. They're never open. Well, I'm not one to pass up a good chance."

Halsey guided the Pelican into the six-kilometer-wide opening and finally saw the interior for herself. It was similar to the inside of a Shield World, with a glowing artificial sun suspended by energy cables in the center. There seemed to be several buildings down below the Pelican. As the scientists passed through an energy field acting as an airlock for the station, they finally got their first sight of what the locals called Hollowtown. It was indeed a town, with proper parks, city blocks, and housing, but it wrapped around the entirety of the inner dome.

"Incredible. This city is larger than any I've ever seen except the one on Coruscantâ€|"

The doctor then noted some sort of control center suspended with energy cables in one of the large cavities that led to the jutting portions of the station. She turned around and flew there to investigate.

Once landed, the science team got to work. Halsey entered the control room first, triggering the automatic activation of the computer system.

"Hmm. I wonder if this only responds to human bio-signals or if it can sense other species. Let's have a look at the terminal."

Anders, who had remained silent for a time, opened a program on one of the computer consoles. The text shown was very familiar.

"I knew it! Centerpoint \_was\_ built by the Forerunners."  
>"You always know everything, <em>Catherine</em>."  
>"What did you say, Ellen?"<br>"Oh, nothing. Bitch."

The team continued to analyze and collect data from the station's subsystems for almost three hours until they headed back to their dropship. The two pilots, Halsey and Anders, spun up the engines and flew back to the opening from which they came.

As the group was outbound, Dr. Halsey saw something strange. There were two ships, with matte-black finishes, hovering just above the station. They had unfamiliar emblems, but were similar to the Republic \_Venator\_-class but with a more dagger-like superstructure. Just as soon as Halsey had seen the ships, they apparently cloaked and vanished.

"Hm. Odd."  
>"What?"<br>"Oh, nothing. I may have been seeing things. Age does take its toll."  
>"Good."<p>

The Pelican and its passengers flew back to a waiting \_Phrixus\_-class medium frigate, the UNSC \_Beijing\_, and docked with their findings.

\* \* \*

><p>On the <em>Louhi's Mirror<em>, newly-promoted Commander Ben Keyes had nothing to do. He had not received any new assignments since his ship's deployment to Coruscant and the skirmish at Alderaan, so he decided to look at his ship's specifications for the umpteenth time.

\*\*NAME: UNSC \*\*\_\*\*Louhi's Mirror\*\*\_\*\*

>CLASSIFICATION: <strong>\_\*\*Rigel\*\*\_\*\*-class heavy destroyer

>COMPLETED: 18 August 2560<br>COMMANDER: Cmdr. Keyes, Benjamin Jacob\*\*

Ben read through the physical specifications, weapons, and crew roster of his ship again and again until his brain hurt. Finally, he was able to sleep.

Several hours later, Benjamin was shocked awake by alarm klaxons. He quickly grabbed his naval uniform, dressed, and practically kicked the door down to get out of his bunkroom. What he saw horrified him. His crewmembers were being mowed down by the dozens by what looked like Republic clones! Ben grabbed his sidearm, an antique .357 magnum revolver, and sprinted to the bridge. When one "clone" tried to shoot him, he felled it with one shot from the gun. After several minutes of desperate sprinting, Keyes entered the bridge, where a firefight was taking place between his ship's ODSTs and the "clones." He opened fire on the clones along with the troopers, and after twenty minutes the enemy was finally vanquished.

"Get Coruscant Surface Command on the line and tell them to notify the Chancellor that some rogues have boarded the \_Louhi's Mirror\_."

>"Yes sir."<p>

The Comms Officer walked briskly to his post and began a transmission to CSC. Ben followed him.

"Sir, we have a transmission incoming. It's from the \_Louhi's Mirror\_."

>"Answer it, then."<p>

The CSC technician complied, and Commander Keyes appeared on the screen.

"General Michtom."

>"Commander Keyes. Why are you calling my garrison? I'm an Army man, you're Navy."<br>"I need a favor, sir."

>"Oh?"<br>"Go and tell that son-of-a-bitch Chancellor that his troops stormed \_my ship\_. Sir."

>"What?"<br>"A battalion of clone troopers boarded the \_Mirror\_ and killed twenty of my crew, sir! He has to answer for this!"

>"Alright, son, alright. I'll send a man to the Senate and have the Chancellor notified."<p>

Sure enough, within five minutes a courier was in a Falcon transport on a direct course for the Senate Rotunda. When he arrived, he quickly hopped out of the cockpit and sprinted to the door. Upon his

arrival, the Senate Guards blocked his path.

"I have orders from General Michtom of the UNSC Coruscant Surface Command to relay a message to the Chancellor. Move, will you?"

The Senate Guardsmen complied and stepped to either side of the door to the building. The courier dashed past milling groups of senators until he finally reached the office of the Supreme Chancellor himself. As per Senate etiquette, he knocked before entering.

"Yes?"

The small Army cadet became humbled even more upon seeing the Chancellor, but it didn't stop him from clearing his throat and speaking.

"Sir, reports from the destroyer UNSC \_Louhi's Mirror \_indicate that Republic clone troopers stormed the ship and killed twenty of its crew before finally being killed off themselves. The captain of the ship would like to know what your reaction to this is, and what part you had in it."

>"Oh, my. This is an inexcusable offense against an ally by my troops. I had no part in it; I had not even heard about it until you entered the room. I will have anyone connected to the rogue regiment court-martialed and imprisoned."<br>"Alright, sir. Good day, sir."

>"To you as well."<p>

The courier left without another word and flew back to CSC.

\* \* \*

><p>At the same time, Commander Keyes was receiving his next assignment.<p>

"Your orders are to jump to the outskirts of the Naboo system and defend an incoming merchant convoy from CIS Remnant ships. We have gotten word that there is a large fleet in the area, so we will be sending two other ships with you: the \_Justinian\_-class light cruiser UNSC \_New Alexandria \_and the \_SDV\_-class corvette \_Faith and Prosperity\_. Are these orders clear?"

>"Yes, ma'am. However, I'm a bit short on crew-"<br>"Replacement personnel will be shipped up from CSC."

>"Okay, ma'am. I'll prepare to jump."<p>

Four hours later, a Pelican-load of fresh crewmembers was delivered to the destroyer, and it cast off from Rubaiyat Station. From there, it jumped to Hesperidium to meet up with the \_New Alexandria \_and the \_Faith and Prosperity\_. All three ships entered the nearby Hesperidium Gate and began an FTL jump to the Naboo system.

Three days later, the small battlegroup arrived in-system, gave their authorization codes, and headed for the convoy. Aboard \_Faith and Prosperity\_, Unggoy Shipmaster Yeney stared out of the viewscreen on his bridge and thought. He began to think about how lucky the Unggoy were to have joined the OAC. This alliance actually treated them like sapient beings instead of cannon fodder. On Balaho, infant mortality had dropped to an astonishing 1%. Education was now widespread, and Unggoy were beginning to command small ships like corvettes and

agriculture ships. After pondering his species' luck for a bit, an aide walked up behind him.

"Shipmaster, we nearly at target."  
>"Good. Follow other ships and keep eyes open for enemy."<p>

The aide nodded and waddled back to his station.

\* \* \*

><p>Back on Coruscant, Chancellor Palpatine was sitting in his office, doing some paperwork and other menial tasks, when the clone known to many as Captain Rex knocked on his door.<p>

"Come in."

The clone commander opened the door to the office and saluted the aging leader.

"Sir, what were the results of the raid on that destroyer in orbit?"

>"You failed."<br>"What?! How could my men fail?"

>"It appears that they failed to take into account the many soldiers on that ship. Everyone in the boarding party was killed."<br>"It won't happen again, Chancellor."

>"It had better not. I will give the Order in three days. When I do, you cannot fail. If you doâ€|"<br>"I-I understand sir. My men will be ready for battle by then."

>"Very well. You are dismissed, Captain."<p>

Rex nodded, saluted again, and promptly exited the office.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Yes, some major foreshadowing. Also, a note: this story takes place in approximately 18 BBY (2561 in the UNSC Military Calendar). I know that year is not the correct year for the Empire's founding, however in this universe Palpatine takes more time planning his new regime. That, coupled with delays brought by the Treaty of Triangulum, set his plan back a few years. I hope that hardcore fans of Star Wars will understand.<strong>

### 3. Two Betrayals

\*\*AN: Sorry for the long wait. Here's the third chapter; I hope you like the story so far!\*\*

\*\*And no, the courier did not plant a bug in Palpatine's office. Speaking of Palpatine, remember the part with him and Rex talking about Order 66? That happened on the day that the courier gave him a message. Also speaking of Palpatine, he didn't convert Anakin to the dark side in this universe, as he was too distracted with political matters with the OAC to carry out any large plans, even in the background.\*\*

\*\*Luckiswithyouall: No, Ben isn't Jacob's son or Miranda's; he's Miranda's cousin and Jacob's nephew. Explanation: Ben's family moved away from Luna (the home of the rest of the family) in 2539, as Ben's father wanted to pursue a career in architecture. They ended up on



Andalus, where Ben was born just after their arrival.\*\*

\*\*Date: November 14, 2561\*\*

\*\*Location: Near Naboo, Naboo System, Galactic Republic, Triangulum Galaxy\*\*

In the Naboo system, the three OAC ships floated silently next to the freighter. The small ship had been carrying a cargo of metal, particularly durasteel, to Naboo, but Separatist Remnant actions had blocked all jump routes from the outer system to the planet. The only option was to head in at sublight speeds. It wouldn't take long; the freighter had gotten within a few hundred thousand kilometers of Naboo's gravity well, and the only reason the warships were there was to protect it for those last sixteen hours.

"Well, the space around the planet seems clear. Should we leave?"

The captain of the UNSC New Alexandria, Alana Wittenfeld, turned to her sensor operator. "Our mission is to stay with the freighter and our battlegroup until orbit is achieved around Naboo. Then we can leave."

>"This is the most pointless mission I've ever been on-the system is clear!"<br>"Stow the bellyaching, Vicks."

She turned back to the screen and watched as her two companion ships, the Faith and Prosperity and the Louhi's Mirror, alter their angles relative to the freighter. As the four ships passed into the gravity well, they rotated ninety degrees and prepared to burn.

"Retrograde burn on my mark. Three, two, one, mark."

The engines of the New Alexandria burst into flaming life as the ship performed its retrograde burn. The other ships follows suit.

"Orbit achieved, ma'am."

>"Good work."<p>

Just as the group entered Naboo orbit, several blips appeared on the scanner.

"Captain, I'm seeing some large contacts moving at what appears to be hyperspace velocities-I think they're headed for our location."

>"Roger. All crew, battle stations! We're finally seeing some action!"<p>

The combat crew raced to their weapons stations as the contacts began to slow. Finally, they came into view.

"What the hell is that?"

>"Those aren't Remnant forces!"<p>

The seven ships were in a tight diamond formation, and had sharp edges. They resembled Republic ships, but more knife-like.

"Hail them. See what they want."

The comms officer of the \_New Alexandria \_opened up a COM channel between the cruiser and the contacts.

"This is Captain Alana Wittenfeld of the UNSC \_New Alexandria\_. State your purpose for being here."

>"I am Imperial Admiral Denakt Mutane. I have been sent by the great Emperor Palpatine himself to ask you to hand over the freighter to us."<br>"'Emperor' Palpatine? He's the Chancellor!"

>"You were not notified of the Declaration?"<br>"Apparently not."

>"I have no time to give you a holobook's worth of explanation. Hand over the freighter."<br>"Why do you want it so badly?"

>"Our intelligence suggests that there are Jedi fugitives on it."<br>"I thought you liked-"

>"The Jedi are traitors and bringers of death. We despise them. Now, I say to you the last time, <em>hand over the ship.<em>"

>"No."<br>"Very well then. Gunner, target the largest ship."

The COM link went dead. In the weapons stations, the combat crew was on edge. Then, a mere five seconds later, streaks of red light came shooting across the blackness. The lasers impacted the shields of the cruiser and were absorbed.

"Gunners, give that son-of-a-bitch a response!"

The ship rotated toward the formation of destroyers, and a resounding \_boom\_ echoed through the halls. The MAC round smashed into the ship in the center of the diamond, tearing a hole in the lower hull. That ship was knocked away with a jet of air shooting it into space. The destroyers retaliated with another volley.

On the \_Mirror\_, Commander Keyes was frantic.

"Get the Archers and Rapiers loaded! Heat up the MAC coils!"

The rushing bridge crew complied, and soon the destroyer was turning to face the enemy ships.

"Fire both barrels, take two in one salvo!"

The ship shook and rumbled as the two MAC guns fired their rounds. Two of the enemy near the back of the now-disintegrating diamond were hit, and began to roll and pitch as atmosphere was forcefully vented into the vacuum. The remaining four ships began to line up, but the \_Faith \_managed to catch one off-guard with a plasma lance to the bridge. With their numbers reduced to three, the enemy destroyers combined their power into one huge volley and let loose at the \_New Alexandria\_. The shields were broken, and beams of red tore through the titanium-A hull plate. The ship's decks began to go dark, one by one.

"No!"

Just as the cruiser broke in half from the structural damage, lifepods shot out of it. They aimed directly for the friendly ships.

"Fire again! Show those bastards what we mean!"

Suddenly, a transmission from Shipmaster Yeney appeared on the viewscreen.

"Commander, we hold them off while you get other ship down to planet."

>"Shipmaster, it's too dangerous for a ship the size of yours."<br>"We be fine. Go! We kill the rest."

>"Whatever you say."<p>

The destroyer and the freighter head off for Naboo with the remaining lifepods safely aboard.

"Enemy approaching! Fire torpedoes!"

At the Shipmaster's command, five white-hot plasma torpedoes shot sizzling from the emitters. They tracked the first and second enemy ships, impacting with deadly effect. The first one had its bridge perforated, rendering it crippled, and the second's reactors were destroyed.

"We got him!"

>"Good job. There is one left-kill it!"<p>

The energy projectors on the corvette sparked to life with flaming blue beams shooting through the night. The final enemy ship was bifurcated, with each half tumbling away.

"Is the orbit clear, Shipmaster?"

>"Yes. Orbit is clear, enemy is dead."<br>"Good, the freighter has entered the atmosphere; we're on our way out."

Yeney watched as the destroyer rose into a high orbit, passing the broken hulk of the New Alexandria. He then waddled back to his shipmaster's throne and ordered another jump-this time, back to Coruscant.

"Bridge crew, stand by for entry to Naboo Gate."

The Louhi's Mirror fired its engines and disappeared into Slip-space. Three days later, it exited along with the Faith and Prosperity at Coruscant and went to dock at Rubaiyat Station. After equalizing orbits, Ben finally saw Rubaiyat-at least what was left of it.

"What happened here?!"

>"Dock 5 was sheared off!"<br>"Where are the supercarriers?"

He stared, wide-eyed, at the carnage. Docks 5, 8, and 13 were gone, and the other docks were unusable. The traffic control module was cracked open like an egg, while the CSOs that had been there for refit were gone. To top it all off, there were sixteen of the dagger-like ships guarding the wreckage.

"Helm, get us out of here and notify the Faith. We're going into the atmosphere."

The helmsman nodded and radioed the corvette, then turned retrograde and cranked the ship's throttle up to full. The orbit steadily dropped until it ended around the area of the CSC

garrison.

"Hopefully CSC is alright!"

"Sir! What the hell happened to Rubaiyat Station?!"  
>"I don't know! Get Admiral Wexler on the line!"<p>

A COM link was barely established. The background was not that of Rubaiyat control.

"General, the Imperials razed our station! The supercarriers were damaged and barely got away!"  
>"Where are you, exactly?"<br>"On one of the supercarriers! We're trying to regroup with the other remaining ships for a counter-attack."  
>"Wait-do you know anything of the status of the Jedi Temple?"<br>"Last I heard, it was being bombarded by turbo fire."

\*\*--THREE HOURS EARLIER--\*\*

Jedi Master Obi-Wan Kenobi stared out the window of one of the Jedi Temple's towers. He'd heard rumblings of Palpatine declaring a "New Order," around the district, but he had dismissed that as simple rumors. However, on that day he'd be proven wrong.

As Obi-Wan left his spot in the tower, he happened to gaze off into the horizon. What he saw astonished him. Three dagger-shaped destroyers had entered the lower atmosphere and were on a direct course for the Temple. The aging Jedi broke into a run. He sprinted to the Council Spire and burst into a conversation between Masters Mundi, Yoda, and Plo.

"Master Kenobi," Plo began, "what troubles you?"  
>"Come with me. I will show you."<p>

The four Masters walked briskly to a nearby panoramic window.

"There, you see? They are headed straight for us."  
>"Mean that they are hostile, it does not, Master Kenobi."<br>"Have you seen these ships before, Master Yoda? I certainly have not."

>"Seen them, I have not. Research, we must."<p>

Yoda gestured for the other Jedi to follow him, which they did. The group walked to the Archives with a hologram of the approaching ships. They presented it to Head Librarian Nu and asked if any ships such as these were in the Archives.

"No, I've never seen these before. Perhaps a new ship class in the Republic Navy?"  
>"I don't think these are Repu-"<p>

They are interrupted by a thunderous crash from above.

"What the- we need to get up there!"

The four Jedi head for a large courtyard in the front of the temple. Outside, the three dagger-like ships hung like clouds in the sky,

along with several \_Acclamator\_-class assault ships.

"What is this?"

#### 4. Conscientious Objectors

\*\*AN: I really need to work fasterâ€¦ Anyway, I have an encyclopedia of Triangulum in the works, but I'm not sure if I can post it on FF or not since it's not really a full story. Tell me if I can/if you want it in reviews. \*\*

\*\*PS: I was in Tahoe with no wi-fi when I finished this chapter, so please forgive me for the extreme lateness.\*\*

When the four Jedi arrived at the top floor of the tower, they saw the source of the noise. The unknown destroyers had begun to fire turbolasers and literally kick down the front door, the initial effect being the near-obliteration of the main entrance. Several smaller ships, which the four recognized as \_Acclamator\_-class assault ships, descended from the clouds above the city and began dispersing small gunships. The tiny craft shot through the air, birdlike, until they all finally reached the front of the Temple. Well, all but one.

\* \* \*

><p>Aboard this lone gunship was Captain Rex. Rex's mind, at that moment, was highly conflicted, with programmed orders from the Emperor on one side and his own conscience on the other. The orders insisted that he strike the Jedi down with extreme prejudice, while the conscience urged him to do the opposite- help the Jedi to defend against his clone brothers. As the <em>Acclamator</em>'s bays opened and the gunships began streaming out, it seemed as if the orders would shut down his independent thoughts. Then, as the ships descended to the pavilion, Rex remembered the successful battles fought with Jedi by his men's side. His conscience began to win over his mind. Finally, just as his battlecraft reached the Jedi Pavilion, he turned to his pilot, a rookie named Sparks.

"Sparks, hail the Jedi inside the Temple."

>"Sir, that's direct disobeying of Palpatine's-"<br>"Do it, soldier."

>"Yes sir, Captain."<p>

The holotank in the cockpit flickered to life, and Sparks pulled away from the Temple and the rest of the squadron.

"Captain Rex," Master Yoda began, "come to kill us, you have?"

>"No, Master. The rest of us have, but not my squad. I've fought too many times alongside you and your kind to follow these orders."<br>"Very well. Great defiance, you show. On the roof, land your gunship. Now!"

The dropship pulled up to the flattest section of roof it could find, and the clones disembarked.

"Men, do not fire on any of the Jedi. The orders are hereby scrapped."

>"Yes, sir!"<p>

The squad made their way to the Jedi Archives, where many of the younglings, padawans, and Knights were holed up, with a defensive perimeter around the door.

"Freeze where you are. We know what you've come here to do."

>"General Ti, if we were here to follow Palpatine's orders, we would have started shooting already."<p>

A figure came out of the shadows in front of the Archives, that of Jedi General Shaak Ti. She beckoned for the rogue troopers to come inside, with weapons holstered. They did so, and Rex begins to speak.

"For all the young ones in here: we do not mean to harm you. We've realized that our fellow clones are blind fools, chained to the order of one man. We've-we hope-broke free of that chain and are going to help defend the next generation of this Order, even if we're killed protecting you all. For the others: that army is right on your doorstep, and they number in the thousands. The only real solution is to evacuate the temple before everyone inside is blasted to atoms. I have a UNSC comms set from the gunship-don't ask-and I'm going to get some ships down here to help us escape."

He opened the mobile radio set, tuned it to the UNSC E-Band, and spoke.

"Mayday, mayday, this is Captain Rex in the Jedi Temple. All of the other clones have had their minds wiped by Palpatine's order and are advancing toward the Jedi Archives. Requesting backup at the Temple's coordinates."

A brief pause, and then: "Captain, this is the UNSC\_ Kandahar\_, FFG-797. We'll do everything in our power to get you and the Jedi aboard and out of the system. An ODST battalion is being prepared right now, sit tight."

\* \* \*

><p>On the <em>Kandahar<em>, Eighth Squad of Whipray Company, in the 97th Orbital Drop Shock Battalion, was prepping their guns and getting into their pods. After five minutes, the squad leader, the Russian Lt. Dima Rezhnov, gave the go-ahead to enter the pods and drop. Just before the clamps released, he gave a final morale booster.

"Forward into death, troopers, and do not yield! The \_svolochi\_ will fall by the hundreds to our guns!"

The pods were released, and the soldiers plunged feet-first into hell.

\* \* \*

><p>On the ground, a squad of clones was sprinting toward the sizable hole torn in the Temple's facade by the turbolaser fire. In the lead was an ARC trooper nicknamed Hunter.<p>

"Alright, men. Those rogues are protecting the Jedi in the Archive chamber. Our objective is to breach the Archives and kill everyone in there. Are we clear?"  
>"Yes, sir!"<p>

A rookie in the back of the squad looked up, then back to Hunter.

"Sir, what are those things in the sky?"  
>"What thing- oh."<p>

Hunter gestured to his squad to run.

"Get out of there! Before they-"

He was cut off rather abruptly by an oblong chunk of metal slamming down on his head. The front of the pod burst open, and a black-clad ODSI jumped out and began shooting.

"Fire!"

Dima leveled his BR85 and began blasting away at the clones' ranks. Eighth Squad made short work of the late Hunter's squad, then sprinted into the broken facade, following a waypoint set by Rex. They fought their way through several more clone squads without losing any of their own, and finally reached the Archives.

"Lieutenant?"  
>"<em>Da<em>. I am here; the rest of my company should be landing soon."  
>"Excellent. We're going to need backup in order to move the Jedi onto your ship."<br>"You most certainly will. There are thousands of them near the pavilion, with gunships in the skies above. An AC-220 is being sent from the \_Kandahar\_, but I fear that it is too slow."

>"We'll make the most of it. Everyone, be prepared to move once the rest of the ODSIs arrive."<p>

In fifteen agonizing minutes, the rest of Whipray Company's one hundred members made their way down into the Archives.

"Everyone move! The troopers will give us cover!"

The nearly two hundred remaining Jedi, along with Rex's squad and Whipray Company, moved sluggishly through the halls of the Temple. It took twenty minutes to reach the hole in the wall, where the AC-220 Vulture ultra-heavy gunship was hovering. In the distance, large Pod-class transports were entering the airspace.

"This is Transport Flight Ursa Major, standing by to retrieve the high-value individuals from the Jedi Temple. We'll try and get all of you in one go."

Whipray Company set up a large barricade in front of the evacuees, with HMG turrets at the ready.

"Stand by to repel enemy attacks!"

The bulk of the clones finally entered formation and leveled their

guns.

"Energy shields up!"

A large shield dome generator was activated, encircling the ODSs, rogue clones, and Jedi with a protective bubble. Just as the shield was activated, the clones opened fire. In just ten seconds, the dome collapsed under the stress of a thousand bolts of crackling plasma. But those ten seconds were enough.

"FIRE!"

Dima, along with several other troopers, spun up their turrets and unleashed a torrent of hot lead. Fifty clones fell to the ODSs' guns in the first minute, while the Vulture blasted away dozens of enemies in seconds.

"Die, you scum-sucking animals! Raaaaagh!"

The transports grew ever-closer. Twenty ODSs fell in ten minutes, and the clones marched like clockwork toward the barricade. Finally, the transports landed.

"Everyone on! These crates can't take much fire!"

The younglings crowded on first, followed by the Knights and padawans. Soon, only the Masters remained.

"Go, soldiers! We'll cover you!"

>"Master Koon, tell the others to get aboard the transports! We need every Jedi we can get!"<br>"No, I will stay!"

>"Go!"<p>

Plo sighed, and hastily boarded one of the few transports left. Only one remained, with enough room to evacuate the forty remaining ODSs as well as Rex's squad.

"Go, my friends! To salvation!"

The soldiers dashed onto the final transport, and the lumbering Pod lifted off with the Vulture in tow.

"Yes!"

Suddenly, one of the ships turned away from the Temple and left. The rest focused fire on the transports. Several went down in a hail of turbolaser fire.

"\_Chyort\_! The transports are being fired upon! Regulus, can't you do anything?"

>"Negative, unless you want one tiny aircraft to charge a capital ship."<p>

Transport after transport was damaged or destroyed.

"All units, speed up and spread out! We can't lose any more!"

In five minutes, the Pods were in suborbit around Coruscant, on an intercept course for the \_Kandahar\_.



"\_Kandahar\_, this is Ursa Major. Twenty-one of fifty transports made it out."

>"Roger, Ursa. It's a shame we couldn't get any more home."<p>

The brick-like spacecraft and their lone AC-220 escort entered the frigate's hangar bays.

Obi-Wan, who hadn't spoken since he was down in the Archives, suddenly realized something.

"Where's Anakin?"

End  
file.